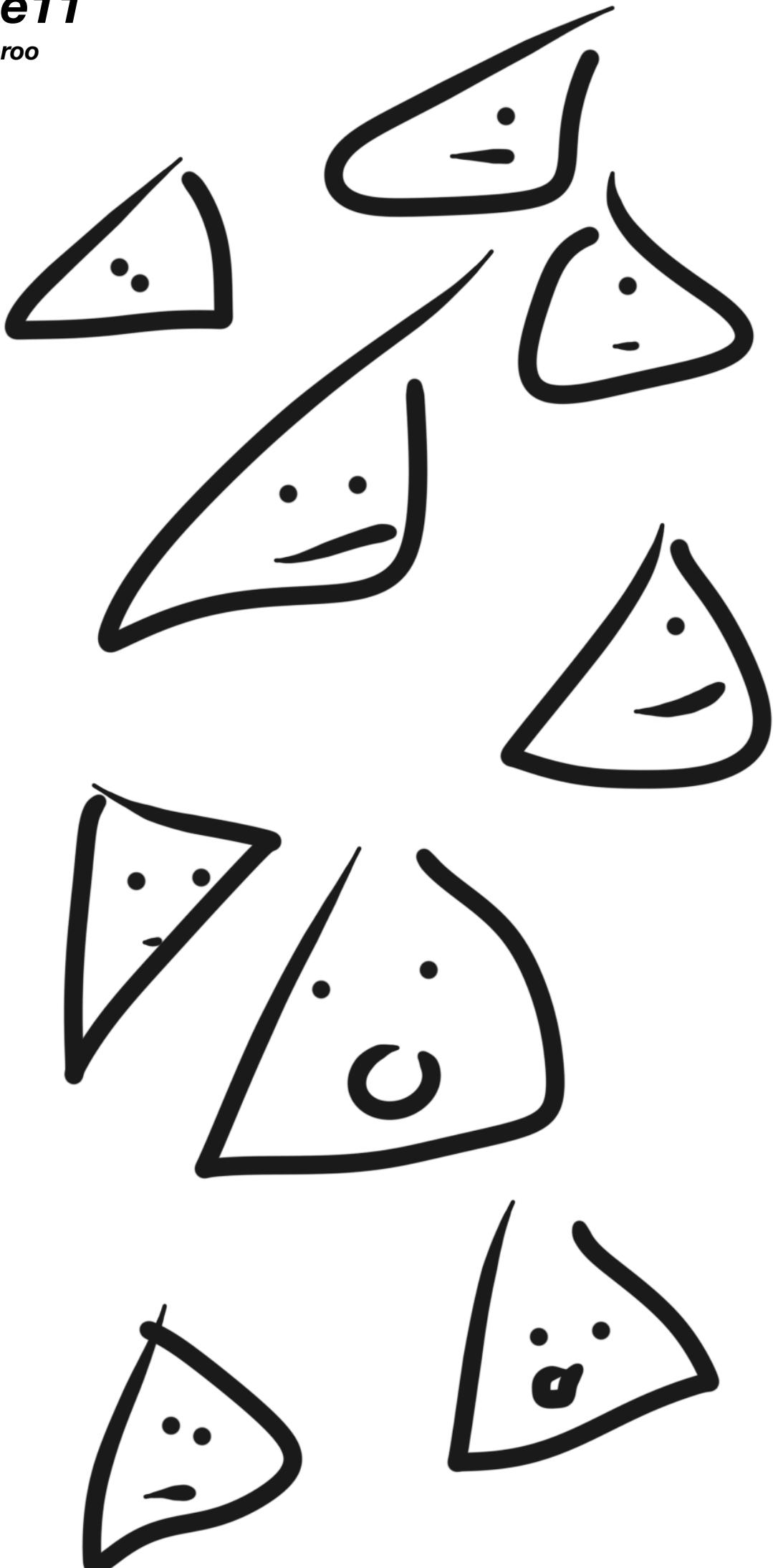


miniMAG

issue 11

Switchoo



Old Martini

I can't help seeing someone else's point. Even when they're lying; especially when they're lying. Caring so much about saving face, or coming across a certain way, that they'll put everything on the line- it's kind of endearing. The other night a girl poured some of her dry martini into my old fashioned. She did this heinous act while I was in the bathroom. It wasn't difficult to figure out what she'd done. Old fashioneds have this deep bitter taste, followed by a kick of sweetness. A kiss after rough sex. Martini's lounge out across the tongue and linger. Totally different. Why'd she even order a dry martini? She seemed more like the strawberry daiquiri type to me. Maybe she wanted to seem game, like she could keep up, or something; I don't know why she did it, I didn't care whether she drank that martini or not, or if she drank at all, but I would have preferred my old fashioned to remain unmolested. I called her out. She denied it for a little while. I wouldn't drop it. I get blood in my eye when I'm sure I'm being lied to. She admitted it. She apologized for the next thirty minutes. I didn't know what the point was. Of any of it. I don't know what any of that was about; I just don't like being lied to. Needless to say: no second date.

By Alex Prestia

The Cheese

By Donovan Hall

It happened in an instant, a blinding explosion of yellow light and a waft of warm air smelling of sour milk. When Omar lowered his hands from his face, he saw his study, in its entirety, had been turned into cheese—marbled cheddar, to be exact. The walls, cheddar, the bookshelves, cheddar, even the floor underneath his feet, it had all been transmuted into soft, marbled cheddar. The new spell Omar had been concocting for months finally worked, perhaps a little too well. The goal had been just bar of lead sitting on the table, which was now obviously cheddar, but the whole study, that was overkill. However, there was hope to be had with such potent magic. Someone would pay out the nose for turning a ton of trash into a lifetime supply of cheese!

A smile started to crinkle his face. This could change everything! No more working kids' birthdays shooting sparkles from his sleeves, and no more scathing housewives yelling at him for accidentally burning their lawns. This was their ticket out! His eyes widened as he stared at the cheese. Their future

would be paved with this edible gold! But just as he was about to smile, a dreadful chill ran through Omar's bones.

Omar glanced to the right, and there she was, arms still raised in defense, locked frozen in that frightened stance. Insari was his research assistant and, more importantly, his partner, and she too had been turned into cheese.

"Insari?" Omar asked.

Insari could not reply. She was too busy being made of cheese, and cheese could not talk.

"Insari! Can you hear me?"

Even if she could, there was no way of communicating that to Omar, because, again, the whole cheese thing was getting in the way.

Omar reached out to touch his partner's arm. She was soft under his touch, and that was enough to make him recoil, fearing he'd accidentally break off her wrist.

"Why was I spared this cheesy fate?" he asked himself, staring around the room, dumbstruck. Then he looked down at his hands and saw the answer. On his right hand he wore a silver ring inscribed with a protection spell. Insari had given it to him on their fourth anniversary. Though Omar never said it aloud, he'd always suspected that she'd been played for a fool, and that the ring was a counterfeit. Insari was no mage, she didn't know a phylactery from a scrying stone, and there were always fraudster magicians enchanting trash with shiny auras or etching them with nonsense sigils to pawn as genuine articles.

He took the ring off and tried to put it on Insari's yellow finger. Nothing happened, of course. Warding rings only work to prevent magical effects, not reversing them.

Now who's the fool...?

Blinking, Omar wiped away his tears with the back of his hand. Sadness was appropriate, he told himself, but it wasn't useful. He needed to think. He needed information. Outside the window, he saw what the state of things were. The sparrows and trees in the yard hadn't turned to cheese. That was a good sign. He hadn't inadvertently ended the world in a dairy-themed apocalypse, but now he had to figure out exactly how much damage had been done. What were the parameters...how deep did the cheese run in what it had transformed?

"Let's see..." Omar said as he started pacing in circles. "I can fix this... I can fix this... I just need my spell components." He glanced over at the shelf behind him full of jars and bottles. Naturally, turned to cheese. The bat wings, snail shells, manticore venom, all of it, cheese. And it wasn't like he had the money to replace it all...not before the rats ate his wife, at any rate. *I could use the grimoire...* he thought, but he quickly squashed the idea. Anything was better than using that dreadful book.

He lifted his hand again to look at his ring and set off to the town market. Markus would have some unicorn marrow in stock, if he was lucky. A couple ounces was all he needed to lift a spell. So, when he arrived at Markus's old shop and showed him the silvery band, he was disappointed at how Markus looked at the thing the same way a man looked at moldy chunk of ham wondering if he could just eat around the mold. Omar wasn't the only one suspicious of counterfeits.

"Come on, Markus," Omar pleaded. "You know me. I just need one phial of unicorn marrow. I messed up big time. A

spell...Insari... I just need the marrow to fix things.”

The bearded alchemist sucked his teeth and finally conceded.

“Fine. Don’t tell me anymore. I don’t want to know.”

Markus set the phial on the counter, small and round with slivers of white floating in a blueish solution. “It’s a bit old, but it’s all I have left. Unicorns aren’t exactly as plentiful as they used to be. I’ll throw in an extra gold, for old time’s sake.”

Omar took it without question. Sure, the ring was worth more, but it didn’t matter. He had what he needed, so he hurried home and began setting up the spell to free Insari from her cheesy form. He said the words and did the hand signs while holding the vial, only to have nothing happen. Three more times he tried to dispel the cheddar, but three times nothing happened. Omar opened the vial and put a drop to his lips. It tasted of acid instead of sugar. *Fuck!* The marrow had gone bad.

So now what? Omar sat on his cheddar desk chair and pinched his brow to push back the growing headache. He thought about going back to Markus, but what would be the point? Markus didn’t have any marrow left, and the old goat didn’t do refunds. Ever. Maybe another town would have some marrow, but the nearest town with a components shop was a day’s ride away. And even if they did have some, and that was a big if, Omar didn’t have the money to pay for it. He doubted he had enough for much more than the roundtrip fare. And just the thought of leaving Insari alone made him feel uncomfortable. The rats would not wait...

Omar let his shoulders droop and shook his head, “I guess

there's only one option left."

Setting the useless vial on the desk, Omar retreated to his bedroom. Underneath his bed was an old chest with an iron padlock. He unlocked the chest with a hand sign and a magic word and started sifting through his old things until he found a leather-bound grimoire and a bag of sulfur salt. Looking at the ugly, forbidden book, Omar sighed. He hoped he'd never have to use it, that he'd one day work up the courage to burn the book and all its infernal rites, but no wizard could ever let such a gem of ageless knowledge disappear untasted. And now, it was all he had to work with. A devil's irony indeed.

He thumbed through the yellowed pages until he found the summoning he needed, read the instructions, then got to work setting up the ritual. He pricked his finger to mix his blood with the salt, then he poured it out in a circular pattern on the floor. Once the summoning circle was set, he held up the grimoire and began to read the infernal words. As he spoke, the fabric of reality tore open above the salt circle and a shapeless creature poured out of the wound. Its pinkish red flesh flowed like thick putty, and its many eyes stared unblinking like so many tourmaline carbuncles. And from its many mouths spoke a single voice that shook the walls of Omar's bedroom.

"For what purpose have you summoned me, mortal?"

"Hear me, devil!" Omar said, trying his best to sound authoritative. It was difficult façade to hold up as he felt the air in the room start to chill. "I demand you undo the magic that has transmuted my partner Insari and upper story of my house into cheese!"

The devil made a wet, coughing laugh and rolled its many

eyes. “Ha! You called me for such a mundane task? Very well, but I tell you, my services do not come freely!”

Omar took a deep breath. “Then what do you require?”

The creature’s many mouths grinned, flashing their many rows of jagged teeth. “Your arm. Your dominant arm.”

“My...dominant arm?” Omar echoed, a little shaken by the request.

“I hunger for human flesh, and the crunch of knuckle bones I find to be most delightful.” One mouth licked its lips with a fleshy tongue. “Give me your dominant arm, and I will dispel the magic on this house. Simple.”

“And my partner, Insari!” Omar was quick to remind the monster. “Say it!”

“The magic will be dispelled from your house and your Insari. Now present me your dominant arm. And be truthful, for I will know if you lie.”

Omar swallowed hard. A wizard needed his dominant hand to do his spells and cantrips properly. The monster might as well have been asking a scribe to take away his thumbs. And what good would it be to bring Insari back just to have them both fall into poverty? He looked at the devil creature a moment longer, watching the mass of flesh stretch and squish within the confines of its summoning circle, as if being idly molded by invisible hands. It was a patient creature. It could wait in that circle for centuries, but Insari didn’t have centuries. The rats would be upon her before nightfall. So, Omar took a deep breath and offered his left arm.

The largest of the creature’s many mouths reached out like a fleshy tube of teeth, engulfing Omar’s left arm up to the elbow.

At first, Omar felt an odd, wet warmth, and then the teeth sank in. The pain was so sharp and quick that by the time he was screaming, his arm had already been sheared clean off, with only a bloody stump remaining. He fell to his knees as he watched as the creature devoured his flesh, listening to the bones snap like twigs as it chewed. Then, he'd swallowed his meal, the lidless tourmaline eyes seemed to flash with a subtle sparkle.

“It is done! Your house and your Insari have been restored!”

Above him, Omar heard the sound of movement upstairs, a door opening, and then the soft taps of feet coming down the creaky stairs. Omar looked towards the hallway, expectantly, seeing his wife. But to his terror, she was not the woman of flesh and blood whom he'd fallen in love with but rather her cheese form animated. She walked with an unbalanced gait, one hand on the wall to keep from tripping. She blinked her eyes when she saw Omar, and wobbled towards him, arms outstretched, but when she moved her mouth to speak, her voice sounded airy and hollow.

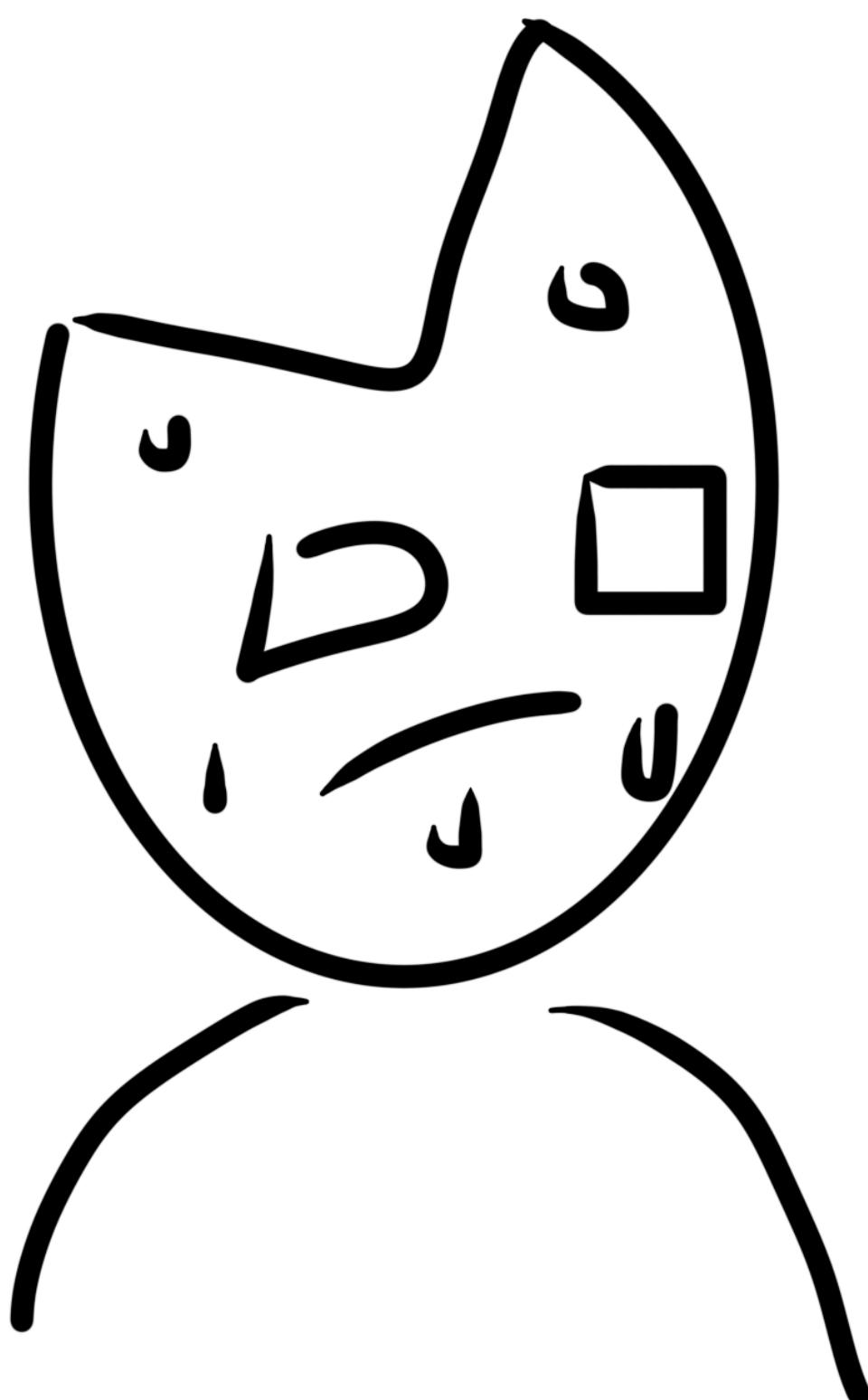
Omar rushed to catch her before she fell, embracing the soft, yellow woman in his arms.

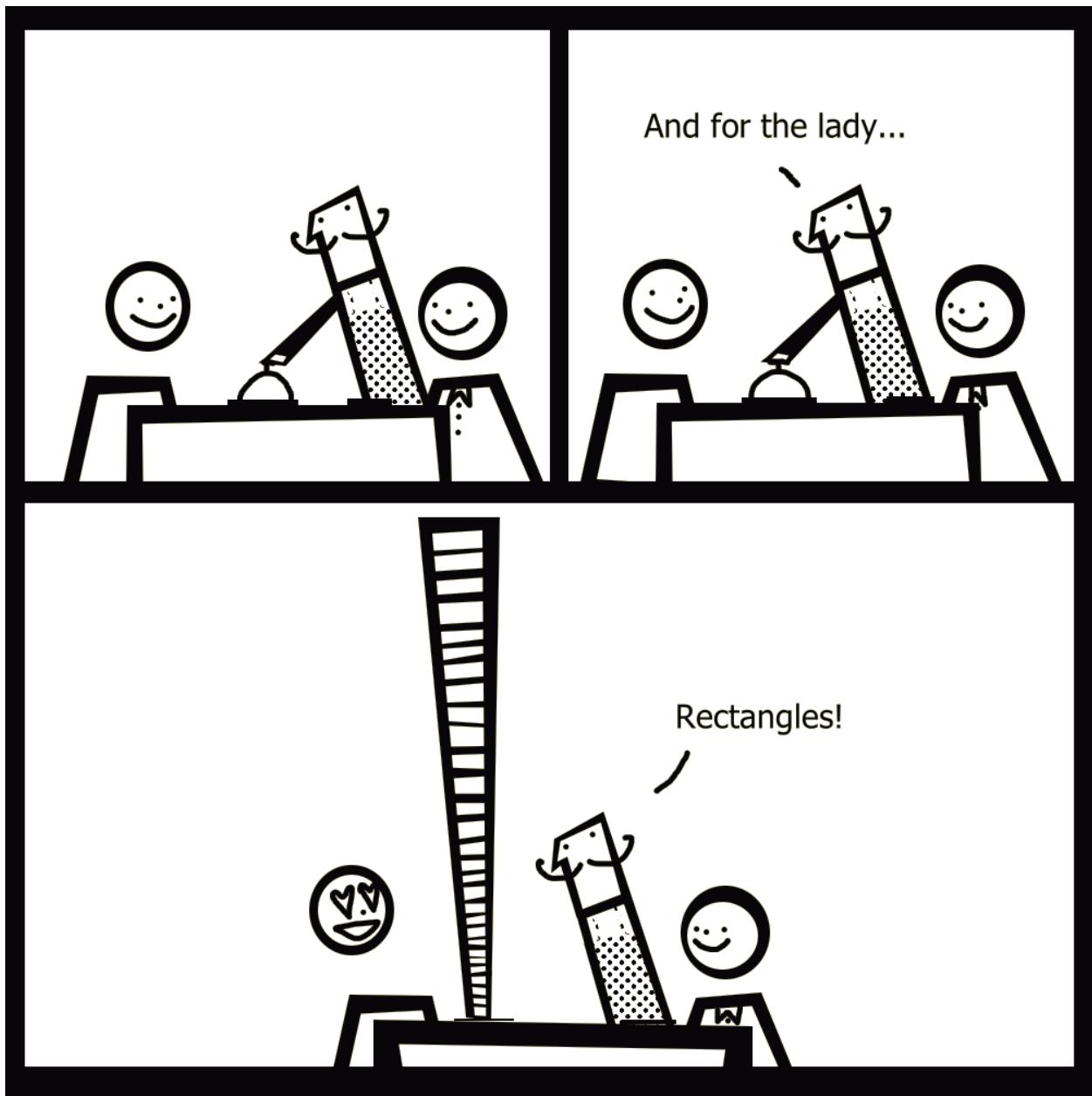
“You have cheated me, wizard!” the devil hissed from. “I warned you I would know. Inferior payment yields an inferior product!”

“Wait!” Omar cried, turning towards the salt circle. But it was too late. The devil dissolved into the void from whence it came.

Looking back at his dairy-made companion, Omar

remembered the gold coin still sitting in his pocket. If Insari could walk, that meant she could travel with him, and somewhere out there in the wide world must have been a cure. He kissed Insari on her cheddary lips and smiled. “Don’t worry. This isn’t over yet.”





Order Up!

By Anon

waiting for lizoh

(a duo-logue)

By Perkus Tooth

We're still human.

Yeah. Wait, you and me? We're people.

People?

Homo sapiens.

Homo erectus.

Like garlic?

Like don't go into the traumatic position. Er. A
traumatic position.

You mean if you suffered in that position, mimic
would be-

Right.

O.

So, the assault of the object is traumatic?

The hegemonic bulldozing of the object is the trauma.

Humans can't handle this.

Humans?

People.

PIRATES.

Humans as people. Whaddaya mean pirates?

People are changing.

Changing as people or changing from people?

And that's why maybe they're not human.

All humans are people but not all people are humans?

No, they are. The difference is cultural.

Cultural? It is created and collected and continued?

They had to make 'flarf' they had to have some
motion in the culture, and they extinguished what
we gave them which was originality and expression.

They the humans.

We the people.

AND DID THOSE HILLS-

Oh. I remember.

IN ROVING TWO SPEED TIMES-

I remember Larry. The beginner. The DADA.
Father?

Phil MacKraken?

Philadelphia, you say?

Home of the pull top tab.

You don't say.

Calling the slaughterhouse gates on a 773 area code.
Stop Zimmermaning around.

That better be a Bobby Dee reference. Florida is for
Evans. Still a 773.

It'll lay you right down, sixty five skiddo!

Tasteless.

The homeless walking around.

Rained oil upon.

That's livering!

So, they call us flarf?

Flarf.

The slow degradation of the senses evolving into a
singsong rhyme of colours of snippets, somebody
else's wishes somebody else's dreams?

And this, your dream, your wish, you're taking it back?

Taking it all back? Because the Simpsons did it?

Christ, the Flintstones have done that.

Fred?

Fred did it.

Fred on the Moon first too.

Don't you mean MoonRock?

I heard them Moon Rock is from Chile and MoonRock
is from Ecuador.

Honduras? What the fuck?

You must appeal to the audience, you know.

I like cultivate. Appeal sounds legal.

Fine, you must grow your audience.

I like cultivate. Grow means you'd let something in,
like an english garden. I want a very eastern garden.

Shouldn't you capitalize that.

You have the greatest hearing.

Thank you. I cultivated it.

Tittering

Have you seen what they're trying now?

I did, the press conference today.

What is that non alcoholic beer?

Buckley's?

O'Drama.

O?

I always thought it was O'Dublins because of Dublin
Darby O'Doulies and the Little People.

You mean, the Banshee?

The females are called Siren, like the X-men.

Then she hit that Infinity Gauntlet?

It hit her. Like a Wailmer.

WHO'S THAT POKEMON?

Stop it.

Excuse me. I broke wind and flarfed.

The Wall Street Journal.

It's like they see the end and they try and
cannibalize.

But you know, now the audience knows what to take
in the end. They know the category to search.

Oh. And collage indeed.

Indeed. Collagen?

Like those poor people answering questionnaires
after the Tsunami.

Reports. Data. Information. Gotta catch it all, to
predict the fiat.

That's all?

Yee-buh-dee-ba-dee-ba-dee-buh-dee-buh.

Ours poetica?

Did you ever read Reality Hunger by the guy that went on the Stephen
Colbert Show?

No, but I did leave House of Leaves at Alyson's
house. I didn't mean it in any way at all, but the
stupid thing about time is that's what it does.

I never got to finish it, even though Roz, who
recommended books Lindsay Baumgartner was
Umberto Echo Etc, even though Roz's library seemed
to be much of Dave (?) I mean, Elmore Leonard
covered the tops of her shelves where she couldn't
reach above those leafy paintings and the cooing
cooing cooing of bert sesame's west side filmed to
resemble chronic city's haunts (the upper east side,

the last place left for a new yorkers to say I was here
before this upper east train stations were built), or at
least, you know my OPP (original placement
positioning) when it comes to creating imaginary
haunts for characters.

Roz gave me that copy.

Sorry, give her some Percival Everett.

Wounded was a bad choice.

Oooo.

How much more truths to tell?

Oh, I'm sure they'll end up being lies by conference time.

Crazy times, weren't they?

Get off, get out, get gone.

That is the cure.

Reality Hunger, you say?

Yeah, look it up. Reality Hunger, I know those words
are rite.

Yeah, in the end the books I give to people, the things
I give, the things I do, they always Alanis Morissette
all over the place.

Are you sure it's not just perception?

I do live at Camp Seneca.

Deux Ex.

That is a great album.

?

The English Band.

I like a single X. More purified.

They based so much of that from Ms.Pac-Man.

That was Viggo and Exenia's love story, they joked.

Doe, Zoom.

She was back then.

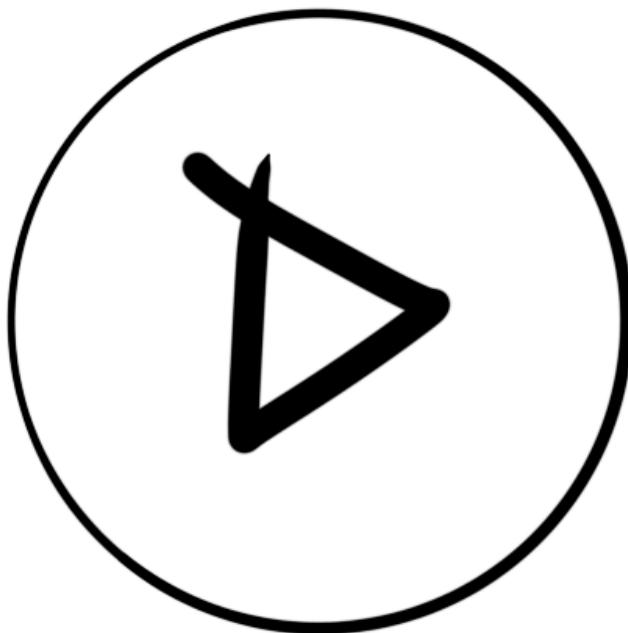
Did you see her license plate exhibit?

I bought the book and she signed it.

Wow. That's gotta be worth something.

Oh yeah. Money in the bank.





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“waiting for lizoh (a duo-logue)” by Perkus Tooth

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